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Statement submitted by International Movement ATD Fourth World, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

International Movement ATD Fourth World conducted a participatory evaluation of the impact of the Millennium Development Goals on people living in extreme poverty from early 2011 to late 2013 with the aim of contributing to the achievement of the Goals. The evaluation involved more than 2,000 people from 22 countries, a majority of whom were people living in poverty or in extreme poverty.

The core of the research was carried out in 12 of the countries in which International Movement ATD Fourth World has an active presence: Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Burkina Faso, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines and Poland. The inclusion of some developed countries emphasizes the fact that chronic poverty exists around the world, not only in those countries targeted by the Millennium Development Goals, preparing the ground for proposals for the next sustainable development agenda, which aims at being universal.

This process enabled participants to speak out about the violence of extreme poverty, a violation of dignity and of all human rights worsened by processes of stigmatization, discrimination, humiliation and exclusion. Top-down attempts at fighting poverty often end up harming impoverished communities which, as a result, remain entrenched in extreme poverty because their long history of persecution and exploitation is not taken into account. Extreme poverty represents an unacceptable waste of human potential.

Thinking together on an equal footing with people trapped in extreme poverty requires overcoming many obstacles on both sides of the discussion. People living in poverty need time to build a collective understanding of their situation as well as to construct a sense of pride that counteracts their stigmatization and isolation. For better-off people, sharing power is frequently the most daunting challenge. It requires a commitment to a dialogue among equals, rooted in a sense of justice and a desire to develop more effective policies.

The global dialogue on the post-2015 agenda needs both to connect and to distinguish between inequality, poverty and extreme poverty. More adequate and participatory ways to measure poverty and extreme poverty are needed to dispel the illusions created by misleading global statistics. The $1.25-a-day criterion should no longer be considered as a reliable global measure of extreme poverty. Programmes based on the Millennium Development Goals have not reached the most impoverished populations and have ignored the connection between inequality, poverty and climate justice. In order for the post-2015 development agenda to succeed in reducing disparities and eradicating extreme poverty, development targets should be considered to have been met only when they have been met for all relevant groups, including the bottom 20 per cent in every population, from the national to the local level. A new model of development should include peacebuilding and institution-building goals to support fragile and post-conflict States, and to align development targets with a human rights framework.

The participatory research made it clear that, very often, development projects work against people living in extreme poverty, not for them. Ill-adapted development projects harm them, and, sometimes, international aid acts to silence the most impoverished. Investments frequently fail to reach impoverished people doing informal work or to provide them with quality health care, social protection

systems, housing or sanitation. Gender equality must be enhanced through changes in mindsets and laws, and the contributions of migrants must be recognized.

The mixed results on education-related targets of the Millennium Development Goals suggest that programmes need to provide equitable access to learning. Obstacles to this include discrimination against, and stigmatization of, disadvantaged students and their parents, the hidden costs of "free education"; students' lack of legal identity documents and the growing trend towards privatizing education to the detriment of public schools. Quality education for all requires a learning environment based on partnership and cooperation between teachers, students, parents and communities. This approach leads to learning outcomes that truly benefit students and communities. Fighting against stigmatization and discrimination is crucial in the commitment to eradicate extreme poverty. The participatory evaluation underlines that people experiencing poverty would like to be able to participate more widely in the development process itself. There are many barriers to participation in development programmes at both the local and national levels, as well as in international development institutions. Yet, the participation of people living in poverty is a learning and regenerating process for people and institutions that commit to it.

Our recommendations for the post-2015 development agenda:

1. Leave no one behind

"It's difficult to access rights. Some people end up renouncing their rights. What also keeps us in poverty are the discrimination and humiliations faced by the poor. The way the poor are looked at is so harsh that poverty remains hidden: people are ashamed." (Participant from France.)

Leaving no one behind requires eliminating discrimination based, among other things, on gender, income or social status, and actively reaching out to the most impoverished population groups. It also requires taking into account the significant social, cultural, economic and structural obstacles faced by persons living in poverty, and aligning development targets and their implementation with human rights norms and standards, in keeping with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

2. Introduce people living in poverty as new partners in building knowledge about more sustainable forms of development

"There's plenty of aid here. But they give it out without knowing who are the worst off, so the poorest are often not aided at all. This aid creates jealousy, divides our community and ends up isolating the poorest even more and worsening their situation." (Participant from Senegal.)

"Even in extreme poverty, a person has ideas. If these ideas aren't recognized, people fall even deeper into poverty." (Participant from Burkina Faso.)

Shaping a world where all people can live decently and have a place in their community requires putting at the heart of development projects a genuine partnership with people living in extreme poverty. It is difficult to define poverty with a limited number of dimensions. Most existing measures such as the Alkire Foster method and the Multidimensional Poverty Index of the United Nations Development Programme share common aspects. However, as leading anti-poverty researchers demonstrate, existing measures often underplay the significance of

"more qualitative elements (powerlessness, stigma, discrimination and isolation, for example)". These omissions can also hide the interconnectedness of various forms of deprivation and the nature of poverty in higher-income countries.

International Movement ATD Fourth World urges Member States and data collection specialists to give special attention to these hidden dimensions of poverty and to make strides to include them in national measures of poverty. The merging-knowledge methodology developed by International Movement ATD Fourth World could help define and quantify such additional measures.

3. Promote an economy that respects people and the environment

"Lack of clothing, fear, exclusion, feelings of rejection, shame and shyness are obstacles for young people to attend vocational training and to look for jobs. Fundamental human rights are not respected: right to food, housing, health, birth certificates... The human side is neglected." (Participants from Madagascar.)

In a world with limited natural resources and rapidly growing inequalities, a profound economic transformation is needed in production and consumption patterns and in wealth distribution to stop the plundering of natural resources and to eradicate extreme poverty. With a stand-alone goal on employment and decent work for all in the new development agenda, the international community will create the space for more specific targets for this area. Through our participatory evaluation, International Movement ATD Fourth World identified the following barriers to full employment and decent work for the most excluded:

- Pervasive violation of workers' rights and human dignity at work
- Lacking rights awareness, participation, collective organization and accountability mechanisms
- Prominence of precarious and vulnerable work
- Permanence of an unprotected informal sector
- Lack of marketable skills and job-training opportunities for people living in poverty

Full employment and decent work for all should be supported by new investments for the transition to a more environmentally friendly economic model, including the implementation of social protection floors at the national level in all countries. An international mechanism is needed to fund and support their establishment where sufficient resources do not exist. The design, monitoring and implementation mechanisms should include the participation of trade unions, civil society and those living in extreme poverty.

4. Achieve education and training for all based on cooperation, not on competition, among students, teachers, parents and communities

"When I was in school in the provinces, my mother couldn't find money to buy school materials. I was sent home every time I didn't have the required book. In the end, I left school without learning anything. When we arrived in Port-au-Prince, I was enrolled again, but I couldn't attend for the same reasons as before." (Participant from Haiti.)

Most participants in the evaluation process stated that school is the best way for children to overcome poverty — provided that the teaching process and course

contents are adapted to the needs of the entire community, not just of the better-off families. They requested education programmes that: remove hidden barriers to quality education (like discrimination or additional costs); create an environment conducive to a partnership between parents and schools; build cooperative forms of education in partnership with communities; develop context-appropriate education, eliminating the pervasive discrimination of disadvantaged students and parents by schoolteachers and staff, as well as by fellow students; and ensure high-quality education with improved results for people in poverty.

5. Promote peace through participatory good governance

"Who wants this kind of life? We dream of a better life, including decent housing and a full education for everyone. We make an effort to move on but we cannot do very much alone. We need support. We also wish to contribute to development, excluding no one, leaving no one behind. We want to work together as partners. This is how everyone's dignity and rights can be respected." (Participants from the Philippines, living in informal settlements in cemeteries and under bridges.)

Participatory mechanisms at all levels of governance should be developed, in line with the provisions set out in the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: "States must ensure the active, free, informed and meaningful participation of persons living in poverty at all stages of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions and policies affecting them... Particular care should be taken to fully include the poorest and most socially excluded persons."

Local, national and international institutions should encourage participatory governance. The incentives for staff in local, national and international institutions and administrations should be modified to make their governance processes more conducive to implementing participatory approaches.

Impoverished communities should be able to participate properly in governance. Participation cannot be imposed, and time must be taken to listen to entire communities, not just community "leaders". Building the capacity of communities to self-organize and build links with wider society should be a priority. The role of civil society organizations that provide space for people living in poverty to speak with their own voices and take part in decision-making processes should be recognized.

Finally, it is necessary to ensure transparency at all levels of governance while creating accountability mechanisms at the national and international levels. The effects of participation and the reasons behind governmental and intergovernmental decisions must be clear for all to see. Independent ombudsmen, judicial processes and peer-review systems between countries can all help ensure that participatory governance is not just tokenism.